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## **PRESS CLIPPINGS**

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*February 6, 2006*

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### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #11**

**(Increased Access to Quality Education and Livelihood Skills in Selected Areas, Particularly Those Most Affected by Poverty and Conflict)**

### **US pledges more assistance for education in Mindanao**

**(Source: The Manila Times Internet Edition – 2/06/06)**

MAGUINDANAO: A senior US government official has pledged more assistance to help train Filipino teachers and students in various skills and scholarship programs in the South.

Dr. Thomas Kral, chief education officer of the United States Agency for International Development, inspected the Broce Central Elementary School in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao, on Saturday and spoke with dozens of teachers who are undergoing special training in Mathematics, funded by Usaid's Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills project.

“We are so glad to see the teachers are happy about the training and we promised that there will be more training in various programs under the project,” Kral said told The Times.

He inspected different classrooms and said his group will work to provide more assistance to the school. Many teachers have complained about the school's lack of library and reading materials and appealed to Kral for donations.

The Usaid had earlier provided the school with medical kit, books and other materials for the repair of many dilapidated rooms.

"We are grateful with the Usaid and the people behind it for helping us and we promise to teach also other teachers learn what we will acquire from this training," one Muslim teacher said.

Lorina Aquino, director of the Creative Associates International Inc., which is helping Usaid humanitarian projects in the Philippines, said the training program would benefit about 3,000 teachers. "And this is just the start of many more trainings to come under the USAID programs," she said.

The project has trained more than 100 teachers in the Muslim autonomous region and 90 more in the Zamboanga Peninsula, she said.

On Friday Kral also led the launching of the Education and Livelihood Skills Alliance/In-School Youth Engagement Program to help train Filipino high school students and inspire them to become responsible community leaders.

The alliance, founded in 2004, is a three-year multistakeholder partnership that seeks to create and expand school and community-based learning and job training programs for young people in Mindanao, especially in the Muslim autonomous region and other conflict-affected areas in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

It also has programs in the provinces of North and South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani and in the cities of Zamboanga, Cotabato, Marawi and General Santos, Aquino said.

The alliance is an international and Philippine nongovernment organizations, foundations and education institutions, including the International Youth Foundation, the Ayala Foundation, the Consuelo Foundation, the Petron Foundation, the Philippines Business for Social Progress and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization-Regional Center for Innovation and Technology.

Its work is strengthened by funding assistance from the Usaid, also under the training program, Aquino said.

This alliance seeks to create and expand school- and community-based learning and employment opportunities. And to lower the high dropout rate and raise school participation and completion rates. ELSA is also upgrading school infrastructure, mobilizing Parent Teacher Community Associations, strengthening Alternative Learning Systems, and providing opportunities for positive youth leadership engagement.

To address education quality and access in targeted regions, ELSA uses innovative information and communications technology and multimedia educational programs. Livelihood training and employment promotion activities support the reintegration of out-of-school youth into the peaceful economy.

Kral said his group will continue various education programs in the Muslim autonomous area, one of the poorest in the Philippines.♦

**--Al Jacinto**